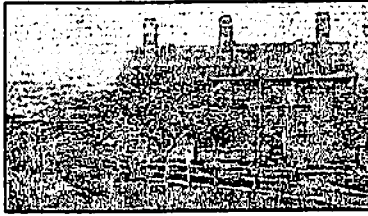


## Tramps and Other Wayward Sorts

By TONY KELSO

One of the many lanes at Forty Corners leads to Duxbury's poorhouse or almshouse. The original poorhouse was built in 1818. This large rambling building stood on Depot Street at what is today the



intersection of Prior Farm Road. The first almshouse building burned in a spectacular fire in 1895. A smaller almshouse was built by the town, which is now a private residence at 180 Depot Street. The land the two almshouses were built upon had been town land since the 1630s.



Some of the other lanes at Forty Corners were called Poorhouse Lane, Poverty Lane, Almshouse Lane, and even Tramphouse Lane. This last one was so named because the building for housing tramps and hobos coming through Duxbury was at the almshouse. In the

early 1960s, when the Prior Farm-Meetinghouse Road neighborhood was built, none of these old names seemed likely to entice new homeowners to settle, so the more historically sedate names of Prior Farm Road and Meetinghouse Road got the nod for street names for the new neighborhood.

You can still see Duxbury's tramphouse if you go to the Public Works Department complex off Tremont Street behind Town Hall. The old tramphouse is the small low, white building with what looks like bars in its windows that you first encounter as you drive into the complex. The structure was moved to its present location when the second almshouse was sold to a private owner in the 1940s.

Tramps and other wayward sorts only became a problem in Duxbury after the railroad opened in 1871. They rode the rails into town, and rather than allowing them to become nuisances around town, the Overseers of the Poor for the town (who also just happened to be the Selectmen), allowed the tramps to be housed and fed. Then, most likely the tramps were told to keep on moving. The year 1894 seems to hold the record for the most number of tramps housed at the old tramphouse. In that year, 263 tramps were recorded as staying at the Duxbury town tramphouse. The building was earlier called the "mad house" and was where the town of Duxbury kept some of its poorest residents, who were at the time judged to be insane.

Folley Street is still barely visible if you are at the intersection of Surplus and Depot streets looking south. It is the now very faint woods path that leads south directly opposite the intersection along the edge of the woods. Folley Street got its name because it was said that "folley led you to the almshouse."

Almshouses, tramp and mad houses and streets named Folley are relics of Duxbury's past attempts in the 19th and early 20th centuries to struggle with the issues of affordable housing, homelessness, and the ability of the town to take care of all of its residents.

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